

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

8 April 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHIEF OF PROJECT

SUBJECT: Control of PBUCCES Black Flights Through Panama
Air Traffic Control

1. Arrangements were made through [] for COWDEN and VARCHETTO to establish the routes and emergency procedures PBUCCES black flights would use while operating within the Panama Air Traffic Control and Air Defense areas.

2. PBCABOONE Operations Officers were introduced to [] as Headquarters ODUNIT Officers on a classified project and [] was directed to provide 100% cooperation and support.

3. The results of the meeting are as follows:

A. [] and controllers listed in [] know only that two C-47 type aircraft will be operating without flight plans from []

B. Flights:

1) Flight Plans will be called into the cleared ATC controllers in this manner: PBCABOONE Air Operations Officer telephones ATC and asks for the Senior Controller. Upon getting the Senior Controller the Air Operations Officer states, "This is Kilroy." The controller answers, "Yard bird here." Air Ops then says, "No. 1 (or No. 2) out at 1700 for 10." The controller acknowledges by, "Roger 1 out at 1700 for 10." This means that No. 1 will take off at 1700 and expects to return at 0300. No. 1 is also known as "Fireball" and "1005." No. 2 is known as "Skyrocket" and "2050." The last two numbers, or 05 and 50, change daily and are the day of the month for No. 1, and the day of the month reversed for No. 2. This is all based on local time, so No. 1 could take off at 1700 the fifth of the month and be 1005. At 0001 hours the number will change to 1006. No. 2 will be 2050 until 2400 and 2060 from then on.

2) The flights will make no transmissions except in the event of an emergency. If an emergency develops in the target area or a considerable distance from [] No. 1 will call "Fireball," No. 2 "Skyrocket," and state the emergency, such as, "Dropped a fan at 12 25 N, 87 16 W, losing altitude." ATC will then inform COWDEN or VARCHETTO

for instructions pertaining to the alerting of Air Rescue Service and what action is to be taken.

3) During the time the flights are airborne, ATC will reserve the published minimum safe altitude for our aircraft. This assures our crews that in instrument weather they have an assigned altitude and that no other aircraft will be at that altitude.

4) Should the aircraft approach [] and need ATC letdown clearance they will call the assigned number, e.g. No. 1, "1005, 10 minutes north of [] request approach clearance." ATC will then control the flight normally.

5) Air Ops will not close out the flight plan. If ATC does not hear from us they will assume the flight returned on schedule. Should the flight become abnormally over due, Air Ops will alert Air Rescue through ATC.

6) In the event the flight is unable to contact Albrook airways directly the crews are instructed to call an airways station and request the message be air passed to Albrook airways.

7) PBCUCCESS aircraft have frequencies installed in radio equipment that are compatible only with Albrook airways. Should they fail to contact Albrook on the assigned frequencies they will then use the normal emergency frequencies.

8) PBCUCCESS aircraft also have one VHF channel, 134.1 MC, that is a clear channel in the area for inter-plane communication.

C. It would be impossible to implement the above stated procedures without cutting in one man on duty at ATC, and in view of the varied operating schedule expected for this operation it is impractical to assign one controller for the periods of our operation. Another factor to consider is that G-2 Caribbean Command has a directive in ATC requiring notification of anything other than normal flight plans. In our case the directive is being ignored, but required the senior controller being able to identify our flights. The flight plan we call in also prevents the alerting of the Air Defense Network when one of our aircraft appears on a radar screen without a normal flight plan as both ATC and ADC are controlled by the senior ATC controller on duty.

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PBCABOOSE Air Operations

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